**Atlas Media Lab Info for This I Believe Project**

**Media Lab Contact Info**

* **Contact person** for working with Audacity (or other sound recording): Tim Riggs
* **Location:** Atlas 3rd floor (contact Tim for specific location, if you are planning to use the lab or meet with him)
* **Email:** [medialab@colorado.edu](mailto:medialab@colorado.edu)
* **Phone:** 303-492-8804

**Email to make a reservation.** Tim prefers to communicate by email rather than by phone. If you have questions about something, of course, you can call – he won’t turn you away!

If you want to record your TIB in one of the media bays, email Tim and arrange a time to come in. Tim is there during business hours every day. **The benefits of going to the Lab to record:**

* You’ll get a much higher sound quality,
* You can get help from Tim as you record (so if you have some concerns or questions, or are unsure about how to use the technology and software, Tim can help you out)

Also, the Media Lab has a **high quality microphone that you can check out**, if you want to. So, if your computer doesn’t have a built-in mic, or you want a higher quality recording, you can borrow a mic from the Lab. You can take it home, but because it is a shared resource, the lab guys prefer that you use it in the lab. Bring your laptop with you, and you can go into one of the media bays and record. If you have a specific reason for wanting to take the mic home with you, talk to Tim about it.

**Recording Your This I Believe**

**Ultimately, your goal is this:**

* Digitally record your This I Believe Essay at a reasonably high quality (i.e., you read your essay smoothly, without much (if any) stumbling; your voice is clear and distinct; and there is little to no background noise).
* Save it as an MP3 file with a unique name

How you get there is up to you. **One way to do it is to use Audacity**, which is free downloadable audio recording software, compatible with both Macs and PCs. (Just a reminder: Audacity is the program I demonstrated in class.) Here are some notes to help you along. The best way to figure out how to use the software, of course, is just to play with it! If you get stuck, you can come see me, or, even better, make an appointment with Tim Riggs in the Atlas Media Lab.

**Installing Audacity**

### First, you’ll need to download and install Audacity. To do that, go here: <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/> Note: Download Audacity 1.2.6, NOT the beta!!

**In addition**, you will need to install the [LAME MP3 encoder](http://audacity.sourceforge.net/help/faq?s=install&item=lame-mp3). This allows Audacity to export MP3 files. **If you don’t install this plug-in, you will not be able to export your file as an MP3, and thus, you won’t be able to finish your assignment!** (NOTE: When you save the LAME file after downloading it, it’s best to save it in the same folder as you saved your Audacity program in.)

**After you’ve downloaded the LAME MP3 encoder, you need to tell Audacity to locate it. Here’s what to do:**

Open Audacity 🡪 Edit 🡪 Preferences 🡪 File Format tab 🡪 Find Library 🡪 click yes on installing LAME MP3 encoder 🡪 highlight the “lame\_enc.dll” file and click “open”

**And one final note on setting up Audacity:**

In order to make the file sizes small enough, you’ll want to change the bit rate: 64-96 is acceptable (for our purposes for this class project). Here’s how to do this:

Open Audacity 🡪 Edit 🡪 Preferences 🡪 File Format tab 🡪select drop-down arrow on the “Bit Rate” field 🡪 select 64, 80, or 96 (doesn’t matter – there will be no detectable quality difference for our project)

**If you don’t want to install Audacity on your own computer, go to the lab to record!**

**Using Audacity**

1. Click on mic icon. Talk. Note that it’s registering voice levels.
2. Now you are ready to record.
   * **NOTES:** You can control sensitivity of mic pick-up. To do this, move slider next to the other mic icon toward the plus sign. Note how levels change. You don’t want to go above -12.
     + Test it out. Do a few test runs. Play back, and if you don’t like how it sounds, make adjustments. (i.e., how close you are physically to the mic; the levels; etc)
3. Click the record button (red circle in the middle).
4. When you’re done, click the stop button (yellow square).
5. Every time you hit record again, it will automatically start a new track.
6. If you want to combine tracks into one file (like, for example, if you mess up but want to keep the first half of what you already recorded and start over on your recording of the second half), just record a new track (i.e., hit “record”).
   * Then, you can move the new audio segment around in time so that it picks up where the last one left off. You do this using the “time shift” tool – it’s the 🡨 🡪 (opposing arrows) in the upper left tool box).

**Extra tip – You don’t have to do this, but you might want to. You definitely will want to do this if you are recording in a less than optimal setting and thus, have more background noise.**

1. To remove ambient noise (buzzing from the room, hiss, white noise, etc), do this:
   * Select the “selection tool” (in the upper left tool box – it looks like this: I )
   * Select the 2-3 seconds you left at the beginning or end of your track without you speaking.
   * Go to “Effect” menu. Select “noise removal.” Click on “Get Noise Profile.”
   * Select all.
   * Go back to “Effect” menu. Select “noise removal” again. Notice the less-more slider – go with less. You don’t want to overdo it – if you remove too much noise, your recording will sound tinny.

**Saving your file**

* Note: Audacity calls all files “projects.”
* If you want to save your project as working Audacity project, rather than as a playable file, select “Save Project” from the File menu. I recommend you do this, just so you have an uncompressed, editable version of your work. This is just as a precaution, so that you don’t lose the work you’ve done if something goes wrong.

**In order to save your work as an MP3 file (which is what you will be uploading to the wiki), do this:**

1. Under “File” menu, select “Export as MP3.”
2. Choose location to save. Give file a name. (Must be unique name! Don’t call it “my TIB” or “my mp3.” )
3. The next window you’ll see allows you to input “metadata” – the kind of info that shows up when you use iTunes, for example (the name of the track, the artist, etc). This is optional. You don’t have to fill any of this in, but you do have to hit “OK.”
4. Your file is now ready to upload!

NOTE: DO NOT upload a .aup file to the wiki! This is not a playable file format!

**Tips and Tricks**

* Have your Word doc open on your computer. Read from this, rather than from paper, because mic will pick up sound of rustling paper. So, hit “record,” then alt tab over to your Word doc, and read. Audacity will continue to record even when your have a different program displayed on your screen. When you’re done reading, alt tab back to Audacity, and hit “stop.” Remember, you can edit out silence and extra time.
* It’s a good idea to have 3-4 seconds of silence at beginning or end for setting/using noise filters.
* Read slowly!! Enunciate. Animate. Pretend that you’re reading to a 5-year-old. Don’t just drone and mumble.
* If you’re recording on your own laptop with the built-in mic, make sure to record in a closed-in quiet space (a clothes closet or your car are good options), otherwise the mic will pick up reverberations and your recording will sound echo-y.

**Keep in mind, if all of this seems confusing, and you don’t know how to use Audacity after just one quick in-class demo …**

* Finding and using information these days is becoming more important in some ways than the information itself!There is a thorough, exhaustive user guide on the Audacity website. If you are stuck, refer to it!
* **See if you can figure things out. Try this on your own before emailing me.** When you learn what you are capable of learning, you gain huge amounts of confidence in yourself. And then, the next time you’re in a similar situation (when you encounter a new challenge, or are using new technology), you know that you know how to figure it out. **You’ve learned that you can learn!**